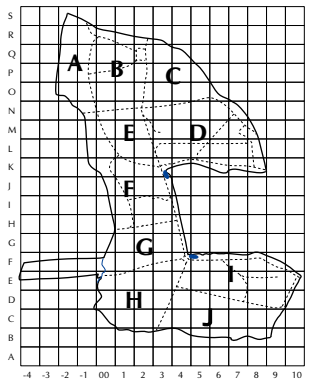


TWITTER

Treswell **W**ood - **I**nformation **T**o **T**ell **E**very **R**ecorder

March 2009 Treswell Wood IPM Group
(Integrated Population Monitoring)

All projects by permission of NWT

Project leaders:

CBC	Pat Quinn-Catling
Nest Records	Chris du Feu
Ringing	John McMeeking

2009/1

Number 71

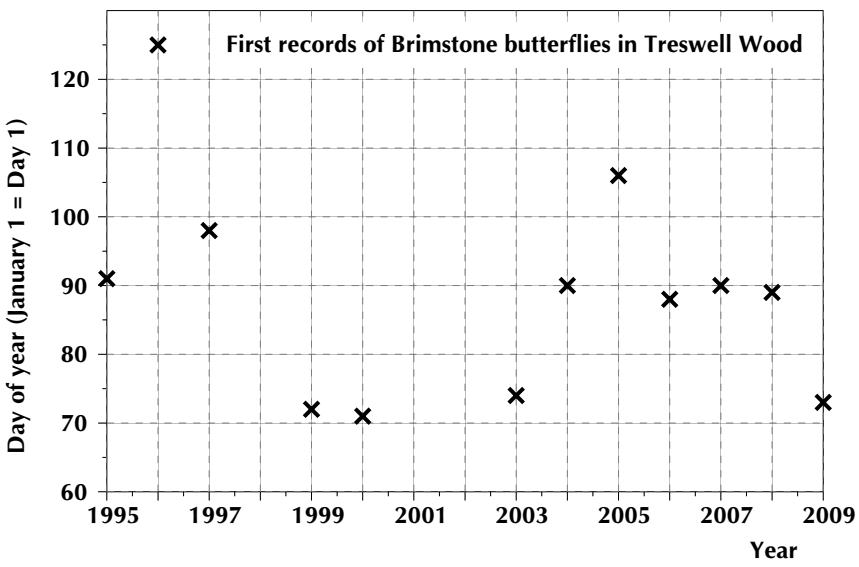
Where are the birds?

2008 goes down as a dismally poor breeding season for many bird species - not just in Treswell Wood, but in much of Britain too. In the March/April BTO News, Mark Grantham catalogues some of the national CES results in his article 'Just when you thought it couldn't get worse ...'. What might be expected after two successive poor breeding seasons, followed by the hardest winter for two decades? Very low numbers of resident birds is the obvious answer. And how can this be measured? By constant-effort catching of birds. Sure enough, our standard-site capture total for the first interval of the year is equal to our lowest ever. The good news in this unhappy state of affairs is that the constant-effort mist-netting, apparently unproductive though it may sometimes appear to be, is functioning well. It is enabling us to measure the state of our bird populations. A message that cannot be reinforced too often is that, without having an accurate picture of our bird (and indeed other species) populations, we cannot be in a position to take any effective conservation action. Perhaps there may also be more good news for the few surviving birds. They must be the fittest birds, having survived thus far. They approach a breeding season with lower competition for territories and food than for many years. Provided the weather and predators do not yet again inflict massive breeding season mortality, there is the prospect of a very productive breeding season.

Contrast the breeding success (or lack of it) with the number of breeding attempts by birds in the wood. Richard Thewliss at the BTO has worked through our CBC observations to estimate the number of breeding bird territories (page 3). The total number of territories is a little higher than in the last decade and certainly well above the numbers of territories before that. The current lack of birds in the wood cannot be a result of lack of breeding attempts as opposed to lack of breeding success.

The CBC territory numbers, as usual, are well worth scrutiny. The Wheatear appears on the list for only the second time. It is only in the 'present' category - that is heard or seen on at least one occasion but no territory found. That seems most likely to be a passing individual on its journey northwards. They are often seen on passage alongside the Trent but not so often this far from the valley floor. Woodland is hardly the right habitat for the species anyway. It requires open spaces - and much bigger open spaces than provided by the much-remarked-upon recent coppicing in Block E. The Fieldfare record of 2006 is, in a way similar; a migrant recorded at the beginning of the breeding season, although in that case prior to leaving winter quarters rather than well on its northward travels. Most species show numbers remarkably similar to those of the previous year. Great Spotted Woodpeckers and Coal Tits have returned to more recent higher numbers; Marsh and Willow Tits together with Willow Warblers now appear to have only a fragile foothold in the wood but Tree Sparrows have the first recorded territory in the wood for over 20 years.

Thanks to Richard Thewliss for his work and to the BTO for continuing to analyse our records. Thanks also to Pat and all the CBC team for their continued, thorough and systematic work. David Glue expresses gratitude from the BTO to all involved with the Treswell Wood operation - an impressive cast of contributors. He hopes that all the hard work provides a measure of pleasure.



Considerable progress has been made with computerising material since publication of the previous issue of Twitter. We now have another four year's worth of background notes from mist-netting visits entered, formatted and filed in the Treswell Wood system - thanks to Jo Surgey for all her work on that project. There are still a dozen year's of notes to be entered and volunteers are always welcome. Steve Wain is addressing the problem of scanning the original field notes in John's 'black books'

which we used before producing our own field sheets. This is particularly important because, unlike the field sheets which we have always duplicated or carbon-copied, there is no backup copy of the black-book data. Why make the effort to computerise all past data? Some of its value can be seen in the graph. Our casual records include, for example, some sightings of butterflies. I did a search using the word-processor 'Find' function, for first records of brimstone butterflies in each year for which we have computerised the background notes. The operation took just five minutes to search through 14 years' worth of records - and most of that time was jotting the dates on paper or issuing the instruction to load and search another year file. Imagine the time it would take to search through the original paper copies, or even scanned copies, by eye. For interest, these first sightings of the brimstone are given in the graph. Before leaping to conclusions about global warming, though, remember these are first sightings from one site only where observers are not present every day and are only making casual, rather than systematic observations. Further, beware of the traditional adage - One Swallow does not make a summer (or, in more statistical terms, outliers should not be regarded as representative of the population as a whole).

Noteworthy Captures

Species	Age/sex	Ring	Date	Grid
Sparrowhawk	**8M**	**DA51893**	**15/2/2009**	**N01**

Our first Sparrowhawk for the year - a recapture of the full adult male we ringed very late in 2008.

Song Thrush	**4**	**RX57845**	**1/3/2009**	**G04**

Our first capture of this species for the year, heralding the arrival of the international migrants. Our Song Thrushes seem to migrate somewhere not too far away, returning early in the spring. This one chose a good day to arrive - far from March arriving like a lion, it was a really pleasant spring day.

Blue Tit	**6**	**R123764**	**4/1/2009**	**Q02 Feeder**

A good start to the year - this bird was ringed as a nestling in 2002 so now is nearly 7 years old. Unlike many of our old friends, this one is not frequently captured in spite of being known at the feeding station. We captured it twice in 2002 after fledging and thereafter only once in each of 2003, 2005 and 2007. If its next capture follows this pattern it will be a geriatric case in 2011. Apart from captures as a juvenile in its first autumn, all its captures have been from November through to March.

Willow Tit	**6**	**T663083**	**11/1/2009**	**L04**

Both Willow Tits and Marsh Tits are few in number after relatively poor breeding seasons - any captures of them are welcome. This one is an interesting survivor - ringed as a juvenile in 2005 and captured frequently since then. Like all good Willow Tits he had always remained in one half of the wood - the area to the south of Norman's Ride. Suddenly, after 22 captures in the south, he appears in the northern part of the wood, having crossed the invisible demarcation line between the presumed Willow Tit winter group territories. This is almost unprecedented. Is it senile dementia and a loss of spatial awareness? Has he been ostracised by his former group-territory fellows? Was it just a chance capture - perhaps having crossed the line to escape a predator such as a Sparrowhawk? Is the long-standing group territory structure collapsing as a result of fewer individuals being present? Answers on a postcard, as usual, please.

Nuthatch	**5M**	**TC61298**	**1/3/2009**	**F07**

Caught in the same net as, but a little earlier in the day than, an older female Nuthatch, TC61197. This is our second capture of this bird - it was originally caught with the same female in September 2008. Apart from the romantic interest (Toyboy with sweetheart old enough to be his grandmother) this bird's plumage held interest too. Some Nuthatches are very hard to age - this one was easy. The alula feathers were clearly browner than other wing coverts and also rather pointed. We do not recall seeing a Nuthatch with such an obvious retained juvenile alula.

Treecreeper	**6**	**5Z1452**	**8/3/2009**	**L04**

This was a good day for Treecreeper captures - four individuals of which one was new and the other three had capture histories of lengths two, four and nearly seven years. This is our second longest Treecreeper capture history. Our longest history, of 8B5230 in 1992, was 7 years and 168 days compared to this of 6 years and 260 days. 8B5230 was the second oldest known Treecreeper in the BTO ringing scheme. The presence of these old birds is pleasing. This winter has been wet with a cold spell in February. We know from our work with Will Peach *(Site tenacity and survival in Wrens and Treecreepers in a Nottinghamshire wood. IBIS Vol 137/4 1995)* that wet, cold winters are bad for Treecreepers. This winter seems to have been kinder. We suspect that it is the combination of cold and wet at the same time that is worst for the species. If tree trunks are wet immediately before the temperature falls below zero, the bark will have an impenetrable ice glaze making it impossible for Treecreepers to extract the live invertebrates on which they depend. This winter, the cold and wet periods have not coincided and the Treecreepers in the wood seem to have survived the bad winter remarkably well.

Treswell Wood CBC - 2008 Results

	Averages						Recent Annual Totals			
Species	**76...80**	**81...85**	**86...90**	**91...95**	**96...00**	**01...05**	**2005**	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**
Mallard	0.2	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.5	0	0	0	1
Sparrowhawk	0.0	0.4	0.4	0.8	0.8	0.6	1	0	1	0
Buzzard	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	p	p	p	1
Kestrel	0.6	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.7	p	0	0	1
Red-legged Partridge	0.2	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0	0	p	0
Grey Partridge	2.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	p	0	p	0
Pheasant	8.2	4.7	8.0	6.4	6.0	8.62	9	10	8	7
Golden Pheasant	0	0	0	0	0	0.1	0	0	0	0
Moorhen	0.8	0.8	0.6	0.4	0.0	0.3	0	0	0	0
Woodcock	2.0	1.8	0.8	0.2	0.2	1.0	2	2	1	1
Stock Dove	0.6	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.4	7.0	3	p	1	2
Woodpigeon	0.0	1.0	0.3	0.0	nc	nc	nc	nc	1	nc
Collared Dove	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	0
Turtle Dove	7.6	1.4	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.3	0	0	0	0
Cuckoo	5.0	2.4	1.4	0.4	0.4	0.5	0	0	p	0
Barn Owl	0	0	0	0	0	0.2	p	0	0	0
Tawny Owl	1.4	2.6	1.8	1.2	1.4	3.0	3	1	1	3
Green Woodpecker	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.4	1.6	3	2	1	3
Great Spotted Woodpecker	1.6	3.6	2.4	2.4	2.4	5.6	6	7	4	10
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	0.0	0.8	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	0
Skylark	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.5	p	3	4	3
Swallow	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	0
Pied Wagtail	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	p	0	0	0
Wren	59.4	55.8	69.0	71.8	81.8	76.4	81	56	69	67
Dunnock	27.2	23.8	22.2	13.4	12.6	8.4	8	9	11	16
Robin	58.4	60.4	46.6	48.0	54.0	81.4	98	73	85	82
Wheatear	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	p	0	0	p
Blackbird	35.0	29.0	28.4	20.2	25.2	27.0	32	33	32	35
Song Thrush	29.6	23.6	16.8	7.2	5.6	6.8	5	7	13	12
Fieldfare	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0	0	p	0
Mistle Thrush	0.2	0.4	0.6	0.6	1.0	2.8	3	1	5	7
Lesser Whitethroat	0.4	0.2	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	0
Whitethroat	5.6	1.6	1.8	0.0	0.4	0.2	0	0	0	0
Garden Warbler	15.0	15.4	9.4	4.4	7.2	6.8	4	1	3	6
Blackcap	15.4	12.4	20.4	20.6	25.4	27.2	29	25	25	28
Chiffchaff	14.8	8.2	8.6	15.8	19.0	18.6	14	17	31	27
Willow Warbler	27.6	44.0	31.4	18.2	6.8	5.0	4	3	p	p
Goldcrest	0.2	0.6	0.4	0.0	0.6	0.4	p	0	0	0
Spotted Flycatcher	1.6	3.0	1.8	0.2	0.0	0.3	p	p	0	0
Long-tailed Tit	3.4	3.0	3.6	4.8	5.0	8.2	9	9	8	7
Marsh Tit	1.6	0.5	1.0	2.2	4.2	2.1	2	p	p	1
Willow Tit	3.0	1.8	2.4	2.8	2.6	2.5	p	p	p	p
Coal Tit	2.0	2.6	2.0	6.2	7.4	6.4	6	7	3	6
Blue Tit	32.8	60.2	67.2	59.2	70.0	50.6	44	49	40	48
Great Tit	13.4	26.8	36.8	31.8	35.2	46.8	46	40	27	31
Nuthatch	0.0	0.4	0.4	1.0	1.2	1.2	2	2	3	3
Treecreeper	2.0	1.8	4.0	3.4	3.6	3.1	2	3	2	4
Jay	3.2	3.6	2.4	1.4	1.0	1.9	1	3	p	1
Jackdaw	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	0
Carrion Crow	1.0	0.0	0.2	0.2	0.8	0.7	2	0	2	1
Starling	5.2	4.8	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0	0	0	0
House Sparrow	1.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	0
Tree Sparrow	21.0	10.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0	p	p	1
Chaffinch	33.4	38.4	39.0	39.0	40.6	48.8	48	39	42	42
Greenfinch	1.4	0.8	0.2	0.2	1.8	0.7	1	p	1	p
Goldfinch	0	0	0	0	0	0.8	1	2	p	1
Linnet	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	0
Redpoll	3.6	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	0
Bullfinch	5.4	3.2	3.0	1.4	0.6	1.8	2	2	3	3
Yellowhammer	1.8	1.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.2	0	0	0	0
Reed Bunting	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	0
Total territories	**457.4**	**457.0**	**437.6**	**386.2**	**426.8**	**464.8**	**468**	**404**	**422**	**460**

Brambling 6F V475918 18/1/2009 M01

Our first Brambling since 2006 (when we caught three individuals) and only the 23rd we have ever caught. It might be thought that this capture was related to the hard winter but, with such small numbers being caught it looks like chance rather than anything more meaningful.

Controls and recoveries

Marsh Tit 4 V475754 15/3/2009 P00 Sparrowhawk victim

Sparrowhawks do have to eat but it is a pity that this one chose to feed on a Marsh Tit. There are very few Marsh Tits within the wood, the species is sedentary and this population is isolated from other woodland populations. With populations numbering only a few individuals, local extinction can easily result from a few, unrelated chance incidents. We hope that the species can survive in the wood but the outlook does not look bright. This bird was one of the few juvenile recruits to the wood in 2008.

Local Tit Movements

There is always a great deal of local redistribution of birds soon after the turn of the year. Birds will move from their winter quarters (perhaps in a nearby village) to their breeding ground. Even many of our resident birds engage in winter movements. Food supply for many can often be better in towns and villages than in a winter woodland - high food-value peanuts and sunflower seed are more easily found in British gardens than in British woodland. Resident species can return to a breeding area much more rapidly than can classic migrant species - there is no Sahara desert to cross between Treswell village and the wood, and the distance is rather less too. With the current ringing activity in Treswell village and in Rampton we are recording many more local movements than we usually do. Together they build a picture of a great deal of local activity.

Local movements of Long-tailed Tits

Ring	Age/sex at ringing	
	Date	Place
3Z9896	**4**	
	16/02/2006	Rampton
	30/12/2008	Hillcrest Farm
	14/01/2009	Treswell Wood
	05/03/209	Hillcrest Farm
ARB126	**2**	
	28/10/2008	Hillcrest Farm
	28/11/2008	Rampton
	15/02/2009	Treswell Wood
ARB130	**2**	
	03/12/2008	Hillcrest Farm
	05/03/2009	Treswell Wood
	11/03/2009	Treswell Wood
ARB134	**2**	
	03/12/2008	Hillcrest Farm
	15/02/2009	Treswell Wood
	01/03/2009	Treswell Wood
ARB137	**2**	
	03/12/2008	Hillcrest Farm
	05/03/2009	Treswell Wood
	15/03/2009	Treswell Wood
BXA416	**2**	
	28/11/2008	Rampton
	22/02/2009	Treswell Wood
BXA432	**2**	
	28/11/2008	Rampton
	01/03/2009	Treswell Wood
BXA450	**2**	
	30/12/2008	Rampton
	05/03/2009	Treswell Wood

The table below lists capture histories of all birds we have caught in Treswell Wood so far this year which have also been caught elsewhere. The sites outside the wood are Hillcrest Farm in Treswell village, Sturton-le-Steeple and Rampton village. The nearest ringing site, at Hillcrest Farm, is one mile away from Treswell wood. It has now been used for three years, with between two and three hundred birds being processed each year. As you would expect, there is much movement of tits between the two sites, predominantly from Hillcrest Farm rather than to it.

Long-tailed Tits are often caught in small parties (which may consist of closely related individuals). This year seems fairly good for the species (which managed to breed successfully, early in the season last year). Looking at the dates of captures of these individuals it is clear that there have been multiple captures at the same site on some days. However, further perusal shows that only two individuals have ever been caught on the same days at two different sites. This may indicate some mixing of members of the parties because, very often, one bird in the net will make alarm calls which attract other members of the party which are then caught. Two of the birds, ageing 3Z9896 and youthful ARB126, have visited three places.

All but one of the Blue Tits have a two-site history which consists of a movement from one place to the other, the exception being V475857. A good proportion of the movements are the typical early spring movements into the wood, and most movements involve first-year birds.

Most of the Great Tits show incoming spring movements, having being ringed earlier in the same winter elsewhere. V475876 also did a little mid-winter commuting but TH28916, pleasingly, had been ringed at the farm as a nestling in 2007. Apart from this nestling ringed bird, all the Great Tits belong to the cohort fledged in 2008.

The movements of great and Blue Tits between the farm and the wood are illustrated in the diagram on page 6 (and thanks to Ted Cowley for suggesting this type of display many years ago - it probably should be called a Cowley chronograph). On this diagram, H and T indicate captures at Hillcrest Farm and Treswell Wood respectively. Lines connect successive captures of birds. These are Red (Farm to Wood), Light Green (Wood to Farm), Dark Green (Farm to Farm); Blue (Wood to Wood). What does seem interesting is the number of movements into the wood, rather than from it. Often the interval between the captures at the two sites is small, implying that the birds are on the move, and may just be passing through the farm heading for a place to settle in more permanently.

Overall, then, these local movements give some insight into the nature of the early spring redistribution of these tit species.

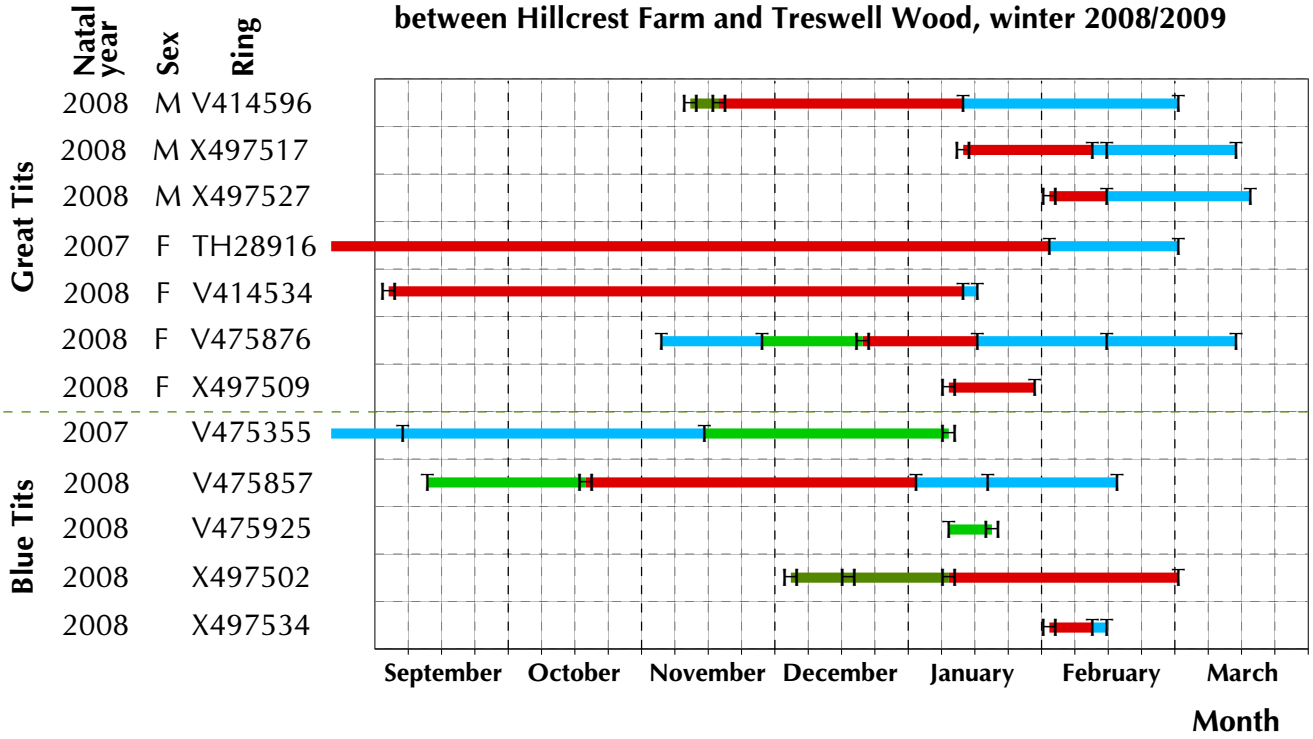
Local movements of Blue Tits

Ring	Age/sex at ringing	
	Date	Place
V367588	**3**	
	27/10/2008	Rampton
	21/10/2009	Treswell Wood
	22/02/2009	Treswell Wood
V414549	**3**	
	02/09/2008	Hillcrest Farm
	18/01/2009	Treswell Wood
	21/01/2009	Treswell Wood
V475355	**5**	
	27/01/2008	Treswell Wood
	16/11/2008	Treswell Wood
	14/01/2009	Hillcrest Farm
V475857	**3J**	
	24/09/2008	Treswell Wood
	28/10/2008	Hillcrest Farm
	14/01/2009	Treswell Wood
	01/02/2009	Treswell Wood
	01/03/2009	Treswell Wood
V475925	**5**	
	18/01/2009	Treswell Wood
	27/01/2009	Hillcrest Farm
V544871	**3**	
	11/06/2008	Sturton-le-Steeple
	15/02/2009	Treswell Wood
	22/02/2009	Treswell Wood
X497502	**3**	
	03/12/2008	Hillcrest Farm
	19/12/2008	Hillcrest Farm
	14/01/2009	Hillcrest Farm
	01/03/2009	Treswell Wood
X497534	**5**	
	04/02/2009	Hillcrest Farm
	15/02/2009	Treswell Wood
	17/02/2009	Treswell Wood

Local movements of Great Tits

Ring	Age/sex at ringing	
	Date	Place
TH28916	**Nestling (2007)**	
	02/06/2007	Hillcrest Farm
	02/02/2008	Treswell Wood
	01/03/2008	Treswell Wood
V367590	**3F**	
	27/10/2008	Rampton
	09/11/2008	Treswell Wood
	28/12/2008	Treswell Wood
	04/01/2009	Treswell Wood
	14/01/2009	Treswell Wood
V414534	**5F**	
	14/08/2008	Hillcrest Farm
	02/09/2008	Hillcrest Farm
	27/01/2009	Treswell Wood
V414596	**3M**	
	12/11/2008	Hillcrest Farm
	19/12/2008	Hillcrest Farm
	14/01/2009	Hillcrest Farm
	18/01/2009	Treswell Wood
	01/03/2009	Treswell Wood
V475876	**3F**	
	04/11/2008	Treswell Wood
	30/11/2008	Treswell Wood
	19/12/2008	Hillcrest Farm
	18/01/2009	Treswell Wood
	15/02/2009	Treswell Wood
	15/03/2009	Treswell Wood
X497509	**5F**	
	14/01/2009	Hillcrest Farm
	01/02/2009	Treswell Wood
X497517	**5M**	
	21/01/2009	Hillcrest Farm
	15/02/2009	Treswell Wood
	17/02/2009	Treswell Wood
	11/03/2009	Treswell Wood
X497527	**5M**	
	04/02/2009	Hillcrest Farm
	22/02/2009	Treswell Wood

Movements of Great and Blue Tits between Hillcrest Farm and Treswell Wood, winter 2008/2009



10 Week Summary 2008 Interval 1, Captures in Standard Sites

Visits: 1954 1951 1945 1946 1956 1948 1952

	New Birds			Recaptures			Total
	Adult	5	3	Adult	5	3	
Sparrowhawk	.	.	.	1	.	.	1
Wren	.	4	.	.	.	.	4
Dunnock	1	4	.	.	.	.	5
Robin	.	2	.	1	5	.	8
Blackbird	3	3	.	3	1	.	10
Song Thrush	1	.	.	.	.	.	1
Goldcrest	.	3	.	1	2	.	6
Long-tailed Tit	3	.	.	3	.	.	6
Marsh Tit	.	.	.	1	.	.	1
Willow Tit	.	.	.	1	1	.	2
Coal Tit	.	.	.	1	.	.	1
Blue Tit	.	1	.	4	.	.	5
Great Tit	.	1	.	1	1	.	3
Treecreeper	.	.	.	2	.	.	2
Chaffinch	.	.	.	1	.	.	1
Bullfinch	.	1	.	.	.	.	1
Totals	**8**	**19**	**.**	**20**	**10**	**.**	**57**

Treswell Wood Standard Site Totals in 10-week periods

Year	1	2	3	4	5	Total
2008	125	130	151	86	100	592
2009	57					
Summary Data since standard site netting began in 1978						
Maximum	128	145	288	253	177	865
Minimum	57	64	94	68	59	364
Mean	91	107	163	135	127	623
10-year Averages since standard site netting began in 1978						
1978 - 1987	90	113	182	140	130	655
1988 - 1997	86	107	170	149	127	637
1998 - 2007	95	100	134	120	125	574